CAJON VALLEY UNION SCHOOL DISTRICT

Having Gaggle Is Like Having Student Safety Support Staff

ABOUT CAJON VALLEY UNION SCHOOL DISTRICT

Covering an area of more than 60 square miles in San Diego's East County, Cajon Valley Union School District serves more than 17,000 students from pre-K to eighth grade across 27 schools.

Challenge
After rolling out a 1:1 Chromebook program across grades K-8, the district needed to ensure that students would be protected online.

Solution
Adopted the Gaggle student safety platform to scan emails and documents.

Results
Gaggle has saved a student life every year since its implementation. It has also enabled educators to intervene in cases of bullying and self-harm.

> **"Gaggle's the one tech tool in budget meetings that the principals are always fighting for."**
>
> JONATHON GUERTIN, CHIEF TECHNOLOGY OFFICER

Cajon Valley Union School District, a pre-K-8 district in San Diego County, California, began a 1:1 Chromebook program in 2014. At first, administrators were manually monitoring students' online communications. "We did use Harpara Teacher Dashboard at that time so teachers could have a glimpse of what emails were coming back and forth, plus the ability to see their Drive contents," said Jonathon Guertin, Chief Technology Officer for Cajon Valley USD. "But as far as automatically scanning emails, it was very limited."

Guertin and his team felt more needed to be done in terms of student online safety. "When kids are connected to technology 24/7, they're connected to their peers 24/7. That's a lot of pressure to put on young students who are just learning about themselves, life, and the world," he said. "You can't put adult tools in the hands of students and not provide some kind of guidance and

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communication. I'm a privacy guy myself, but at the same time, you're using district equipment, you're using district communication tools. I think we're obligated to ensure that those tools are used appropriately."

EASE OF USE AND EASE OF MIND

The district started using Gaggle in 2015, and Guertin was part of the team that decided to implement the platform. One of things he recalled being a deciding factor was that incidents flagged by Gaggle's machine learning technology are reviewed by trained safety professionals. "We looked at the automated solutions that other vendors have put out and were blown away by the number of false positives," he said. "I think the Gaggle touch is really having those human eyes on flagged incidents. I think that's what set it apart from the competition."

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Another benefit Guertin cited was that the IT department has had a very easy time implementing and maintaining Gaggle. In fact, most of the time, it's a "hands-off" operation for them. The Gaggle team quickly reaches out when action needs to be taken (e.g., an alert, platform configurations, etc.). "It's a set and forget, and then when issues arise, we're made aware of it," Guertin said.

Guertin also appreciates Gaggle's 24/7/365 service, especially since more alerts come in during evenings and weekends rather than during the school day. "Being able to staff someone to monitor that 24/7 just wasn't possible," he said. "So, Gaggle was really a great fit for us."

UNCOVERING CRIES FOR HELP

Educators were startled at some of the behaviors that monitoring revealed across the district's 27 schools. Very often, administrators didn't even know something was happening until they received an alert. While elementary students were on Gaggle, their behavior tended to require

minor interventions. However, students in the six middle schools presented a lot of challenges, including bullying, self-harm, and thoughts of suicide.

In fact, Gaggle has helped Cajon Valley USD save a student's life every year since its implementation. "Some students do not know how to ask for help, but I think a lot of our students know that Gaggle's there now," Guertin stated. "I even believe comments are purposefully written in Google Docs to reach out for help." He also reports that there has been no parental pushback regarding the online monitoring.

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That includes the parents from San Diego's East County large refugee resettlement areas. The district has a very large population of families from various parts of the Middle East and Africa, so each school's student population is very diverse. Along with the district's family and community engagement team, Gaggle has helped facilitate communication with those families. "I've had to make calls in the middle of the night, and the families have been very appreciative," Guertin said.

"Many of our students have diverse upbringings," he continued. "And many of our students are living in multifamily homes; unfortunately, there's just not a lot of personal space. It's difficult, and it's even more difficult now that kids don't have school as a reprieve from home. Having a tool like Gaggle is even more important in these times."